

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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72

ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12

INRE-00 RSR-01 /083 W

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P R 122146 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY LIMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4750

INFO USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 1584

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PE

SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON MERCADO'S LIMITED PRESIDENTIAL POWERS

REF: LIMA 1553

1. PERUVIAN CONSTITUTION, STILL MORE OR LESS IN EFFECT, ENUMERATES 26 SPECIFIC POWERS OF PRESIDENT, INCLUDING MANY UNIMPORTANT POWERS AND SOME DEALING WITH DEMOCRATIC PROCESS. AMONG IMPORTANT CURRENT POWERS, MOST IMPORTANT ONES NOT GIVEN MERCADO BY JUNTA (REFTEL) ARE THOSE CONCERNING APPOINTMENTS TO OFFICE. THUS MERCADO NOT EMPOWERED MAKE CHANGES IN VELASCO'S TEAM. HIS AUTHORITY LIMITED TO ACTIONS NECESSARY FOR DAILY OPERATION OF GOVT.

2. HOWEVER, SHOULD BE NOTED THAT JUNTA COULD HAVE KEPT PRESIDENTIAL POWER TO ITSELF AND GOVERNED TEMPORARILY AS TRIUMVIRATE WHILE RIVALS STRUGGLED FOR SUCCESSION. (PANAMANIAN FONMIN DURING VISIT HERE LAST WEEK CALLED ON JUNTA IN LIEU OF CALLING ON PRESIDENT; NOW MERCADO WILL RECEIVE SUCH VISITS.) ASSIGNMENT TO MERCADO OF POWERS WHICH JUNTA COULD WITHOUT UNDUE DIFFICULTY EXERCISE JOINTLY CLEARLY MOVES HIM TO FRONT. IN FACT, HE HAS MOVED AS FAR TOWARD FULL PRESIDENTIAL POWER AS ANYONE COULD WHILE PRESIDENT NOT YET DECLARED INCAPABLE OF

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CARRYING OUT DUTIES. ALTHOUGH CONCEIVABLE ANOTHER CANDIDATE COULD JUMP OVER HIM INTO PRESIDENCY ONCE THAT OFFICE VACANT, SIGNAL OF JUNTA'S FAVOR HAS BEEN GIVEN AND SHOULD DAMPEN RIVALRY. PRESUMABLY ALSO MERCADO'S COMPETITIVE EDGE IN PRESTIGE AND INFLUENCE WILL NOW WIDEN.

BELCHER

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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